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BRAD MATTOON; OR, LIFE AT HOSMER HALL.

BY WILLIAM D. MOFFAT.

CHAPTER I.

THE NEW BOY AT HOSMER.

"HELLO, who is that fellow?"
"Don't know. He looks as if he had seen pretty hard service somewhere, I should say."

"Rather interesting, isn't he? What a queer outfit! If it wasn't winter I'd say he was off sporting, either gunning or fishing."

"I like his face."

"Where on earth did he get so brown this season of the year. He looks like a Cuban or Spaniard."

But he was neither. He was simply a fine, healthy specimen of an American boy, and as he stepped off the south bound train and stood upon the platform of the railroad station at Bramford, he presented a figure well calculated to arouse interest.

His compact, well knit form, was clad in a close fitting, and somewhat worn suit of brown corduroy, while upon his head was a soft hat of the same material, completing an outfit that was striking and peculiar.

The whole effect was brown—brown suit, a brown alligator skin valise slung about his body, dark curly brown hair, and a complexion bronzed by long exposure to sun and wind. While somewhat odd, his appearance was decidedly attractive. His face, of which a pair of handsome gray eyes formed the main feature, was interesting to a degree, and bore a good humored, happy-go-lucky expression with just a dash of recklessness in it that was peculiarly taking.

As he descended to the platform he seemed for a moment in doubt. Turning about, he glanced up and down the station as if in search of something. At length he caught sight of the omnibus in which the two speakers and six or seven other boys were seated. Immediately he came forward.

"Is this the omnibus that runs to Hosmer Hall?" he asked the driver.

"Yes," was the answer.

"When do you start?"

"Right away."

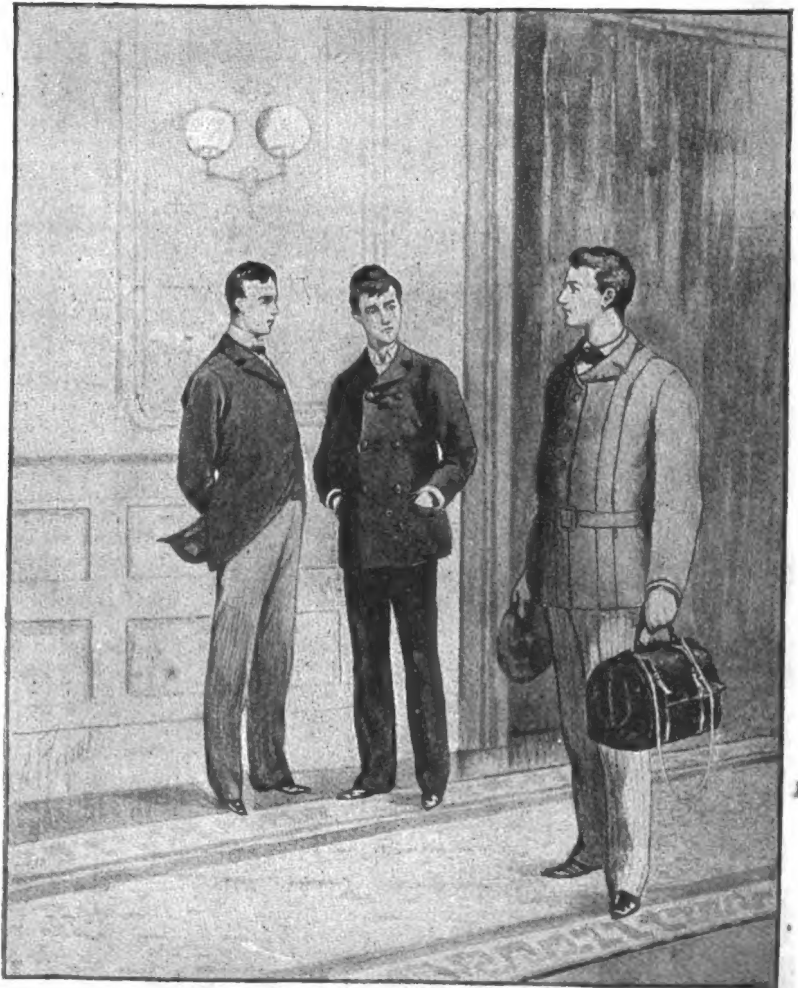
The boy sprang lightly up and seated himself beside the driver. The latter then snapped his whip, and the omnibus rolled off through the town.

The other occupants of the vehicle looked at one another in surprise. "Why, he must be the new fellow," whispered one of those who had been commenting on the newcomer's appearance to his companion.

"What new fellow? Our number is full now."

"No. My roommate, Harry Seguin, had to leave the academy suddenly just before the holidays. Didn't you know his father failed in business?"

"Why, no, I didn't know that. That was mighty hard luck. I must write Harry a letter of sympathy. Perhaps this is a new fellow, then."



"I'VE A GREAT MIND TO MAKE YOU CARRY MY VALISE UP STAIRS FOR ME."

"Most likely he is to be a new hall boy or under janitor," said an aristocratic looking and rather over dressed young man, who had been eying the stranger rather contemptuously ever since he had joined the party.

"Well, I am going to find out," answered the first speaker promptly, and he moved to the front of the omnibus just behind the young stranger.

Leaning forward, he touched him on the arm.

"Are you going to Hosmer Hall?" he asked.

"Yes," was the answer.

"As a student?"

"I believe so."

"You believe so. Don't you know?"

The young stranger smiled.

"Well, to tell the truth, my coming was settled so suddenly, and everything was arranged so quickly, that I hardly know how I stand in the matter. I was hurried off here by a gentleman in New York City who has been a sort of guardian to me of late years. He told me there was a vacancy at Hosmer, and that I must take advantage of it to get an education. He gave me a note to Dr. Hope. Isn't there a man of that name here?"

"Dr. Hope is the principal of the academy."

"Yes, I thought so. Well, Mr. Parker told me——"

"Mr. Raymond Parker?"

"Yes. Do you know him?"

"Why, he is one of the most prominent lawyers in New York."

"Is he?" responded the young stranger simply. "Well, I've only known him as a mighty good friend and guardian—as much of a father, in fact, as I ever had. He said he knew Dr. Hope very well, and was sure I would be admitted to the academy."

"The academy is limited to twenty scholars, but there is one vacancy just now, and I don't think you will find any trouble in getting in, with Mr. Parker's recommendation."

"I hope not, for I've come over with my mind made up to give the place a trial. I'm not so sure that I can make much out of it, though, for I've never been to school in my life."

These words were greeted by a look of astonishment.

"No," continued the stranger; "I've had no time nor chance for school. I've been on the move all my life. Of course I know how to read. Old Captain Bunn taught me that years ago on my first trip to Australia——"

The listener gave an involuntary gasp. This young stranger had actually been to Australia, and not only that, but alighted indifferently to his first trip, like an old tar.

"You must have traveled a great deal," he said.

"I can't remember anything else," was the answer. "It has been nothing but travel, travel, travel all my life. I have read a few stories like 'Robinson Crusoe,' but you don't find many books on board a sailing vessel, so my book knowledge is mighty slim. So when Mr. Parker met me a week ago, when we came in to New York, he told me I must not miss a chance like this; that I would have to give up wandering around, and try to learn something. I didn't like the idea at first. I told him I was afraid I couldn't stand being cooped up in a little cabin of a schoolhouse; but he said it was a mighty snug place out here, and that I ought to do it, so I promised to give it a trial, and if I could get along all right, I would heave to and anchor here for a while."

His tone indicated a self-reliant, independent spirit that visibly increased the listener's respect.

The stranger now turned questioner.

"What sort of place is Hosmer?"

"Very nice," was the answer; "next to home, in my mind. We all like to come back after vacation, especially on account of Dr. Hope. The academy would be nothing without him. Every boy is fond of him."

"Are the studies hard?"

"No. You see, the number is so small here that, although there is a four years' course, we are not divided into regular classes. Every boy is treated according to his special needs."

The stranger shook his head.

"If that's the case," he said, "I'll have to be put in a class all by myself."

"Oh, no; you're all right. You know how to read and write, and I suppose, if you have sailed much, you must know something about mathematics."

"Oh, yes. I learned how to figure about as soon as I learned to read," said the stranger.

"Well, you will find you know more than you think. You needn't fear any trouble on that score," was the encouraging response.

This conversation had taken place in low tones, but a few words here and there had been overheard by the rest—sufficient to arouse interest, and to start numerous and various opinions; so that, by the time the omnibus had climbed the hill on the outskirts of Bramford and rolled in through the large gateway of Hosmer, curiosity was raised to a high pitch.

The arrival of a new boy at Hosmer was an incident of unusual importance, and all were anxious to know who he was and whence he came.

As the omnibus drew up before the large piazza that skirted the front of the Hall, a number of the boys who had arrived on earlier trains ran out with shouts to welcome their companions. During the confusion of greetings the boy who had held the conversation with the stranger took the latter by the arm, and leading him into the large hall, pointed to the door on the right.

"That is the reception room," he said; "you will find Dr. Hope in there. I must hurry out to look after my baggage now. I will see you again soon, for you will probably be my roommate, in place of Harry Seguin, who left. My name is Perry Landon. If I can help you in any way, let me know, and I will do it."

The young stranger turned to thank his friend, but the latter had disappeared, so he entered the door indicated, and found himself in the reception room, where all the boys in a few moments assembled.

CHAPTER II.

THE NEW BOY IS INTRODUCED.

HOSMER HALL was originally the residence of the first owner of the great estate on which it stood. This gentleman, Reginald Hosmer by name, had always been a liberal and public spirited man, with a special interest in the cause of education. He had often dwelt upon the need in that section of the State of a well equipped academy for the higher education of boys. He determined, therefore, to found an academy that would not only train boys well in the usual branches of study, but in which they would be brought under the best sort of home influences, and where care should be taken to develop the best that was in each boy.

"Latin and Greek are all right," he used to say, "and I believe in teaching them, but I want my academy to do more; I want it to turn out fine men, with high ideals of honor and right living."

For the accomplishment of his purpose it was of course necessary to secure the right sort of a principal, and in this Mr. Hosmer had been fortunate, for in Dr. Hope he found a man in complete sympathy with his ideas.

Accordingly, when somewhat past middle age, Mr. Hosmer built a new residence at another part of his estate, refitted his old house for service as the Hall and dormitory, and erected close by another building two stories high, the first floor of which formed the great recitation room, while the second was made into a gymnasium.

The academy soon gained a wide reputation. Parents everywhere were anxious to place their sons where they would receive such good attention, and the boys were eager for the honor of being enrolled as members of the select twenty known as Hosmer boys.

Everything ran smoothly for a number of years. Suddenly Mr. Hosmer died of heart failure. When his affairs were settled up, the fact became known that no will had been made by him later than eighteen years back. This was shortly after the founding of the academy. It bequeathed the estate to his son Edward, leaving, however, the affairs of the academy and that part of the property on which it stood in the hands of trustees, by whom it should be continued on the same principles that had been prominent in its foundation.

This son Edward had had a serious difference with his father shortly after the date of the will. The exact character of this trouble was not generally known, but he had suddenly left home, and it was announced some two years later that he was dead; so, on the decease of Mr. Hosmer, the estate went to his sister's son, a man of about forty years of age, with a family consisting of a wife and son.

The arrival of this nephew, Mr. Gordon Ivers by name, made a great difference in the place. He was a selfish man, proud and overbearing in manner, and troublesome in disposition. Previous to his entrance upon the ownership of the estate, his life had been somewhat varied on account of his fondness for wildcat business speculations. Mr. Hosmer had always helped him liberally when in difficulties, chiefly on account of his sister, Mr. Ivers's mother; and toward Mr.

Hosmer Mr Ivers had always seen the advantage of carrying himself as good a grace as possible.

A change of manner was apparent as soon as Mr. Ivers took possession of the estate, and Dr. Hope found thorns growing rapidly along the path that hitherto had fairly bloomed with roses. He always bore himself, however, with that gentle dignity and sweetness of manner which invariably characterized him, and that had much to do with winning the respect and affection of his pupils.

As an instructor and as a disciplinarian he was equally successful. The whole welfare of the academy centered in him, while his universal popularity made itself apparent at all times.

One glance around the reception room on this bright January morning would have sufficed to verify Perry Landon's statement that the boys were always glad to get back to the academy. At the head of the apartment stood Dr. Hope, the center of a gay group, his genial face beaming with smiles of welcome, and his hands extended in turn to the various new arrivals. In a few moments the greetings were over, and Dr. Hope for the first time noticed the young stranger standing alone in the middle of the room, his hat and valise in his hand.

Dr. Hope's face sobered a moment as he stepped forward and inquired:

"Have you business with me, sir?"

Immediately the group grew silent, while all turned and stared curiously at the newcomer.

Somewhat disconcerted, the latter answered, "Yes, sir; at least I suppose so—I came to join the school—"

"School!" echoed the aristocratic youth of the omnibus, in a contemptuous undertone.

This confused the stranger still more.

"I mean the—the academy—I heard you had a vacancy and—"

"What is your name, please?" asked Dr. Hope, in a tone which indicated that he was beginning to understand.

"Brad," was the laconic answer.

"Brad?" said Dr. Hope, looking puzzled.

"Yes, sir, Brad—that's what I've always been called. My whole name is Brad Mattoon. I have a letter here from Mr. Parker of New York. That will explain everything."

Dropping his valise with a thump on the floor, he ran his hand into his hat, and, drawing a crumpled envelope from under the lining, stepped forward and presented it to Dr. Hope.

At mention of the young stranger's name and sight of the letter, Dr. Hope's face lit up. Cordially extending his hand, he said:

"Oh, I know you now. Mr. Parker wrote me about you last week.

I am heartily glad you've made up your mind to come, and we'll see if we can't make it so pleasant that you will want to stay with us."

Then, turning to the rest, Dr. Hope continued:

"Boys, this is our new student, Bradley Mattoon. Make him feel at home at once. Samuel, send for Mrs. Hollis."

A small hall boy in uniform and brass buttons, and with bright, keen eyes as sharp as a terrier's, hurried out into the hall and returned in a few minutes with Mrs. Hollis, the housekeeper.

"Where is your baggage?" she asked.

Brad pointed to the valise on the floor.

"Is that all?" and Mrs. Hollis's eyes grew big.

"Well, I have a big box in New York, but it holds nothing but knickknacks and curiosities. All my clothes are in the valise."

Mrs. Hollis looked at Brad for a moment with an expression of comical hopelessness.

"Well, bring it along and I'll show you your room," she said, turning to lead the way.

"When you have disposed of your things, Bradley," said Dr. Hope, "come to me and we'll have a chance to grow better acquainted. You will find me in the library, the left hand rear room on this floor."

With a nod and a smile Dr. Hope left Brad, who immediately picked up his valise and followed the old lady.

CHAPTER III.

A DISAGREEABLE ENCOUNTER.

TWO boys stood just beside the doorway as Brad passed out into the hall. They were engaged in a conversation of which it was quite evident from their glances that he was the subject. He did not notice this, however, and was passing on, when one of them said, in sneering tones that were plainly intended to be overheard:

"Well, what are we coming to! He a new student in the Hosmer Select Academy! I thought he was to be a janitor or something of that sort."

"No great mistake, to judge by his looks," answered his companion, and both boys snickered. Brad turned like a flash and faced them. One of them he recognized as the flashily attired young man of the omnibus; the other was a fit mate for him in face and dress.

"See here, my hearties," exclaimed Brad bluntly, "I may not be so well rigged out as some others, but I have been in the habit of judging gentlemen by their language and manners, not their clothes, and—"

"What do you mean by that?" interrupted one of the boys angrily.

"I mean this—that I've a great mind to make you play janitor and carry my valise up stairs, for your impertinence," said Brad firmly, but with no great show of anger. There was something in his look and tone that checked their laughter and changed their expression of contempt into one of ill will. There was silence on both sides for a few seconds.

"Humph!" muttered Brad to himself, "this is a bad beginning, after promising Mr. Parker to try to behave myself. I won't make more trouble," and he turned abruptly on his heel and followed Mrs. Hollis up stairs.

She led him along the upper hallway to the door of one of the sleeping apartments, which stood open. There she paused.

"This is your room," she said. "You are to share it with Mr. Landon. There are ten bedrooms in the Hall, and each room is occupied by two young men."

Brad stepped inside and looked around with considerable satisfaction at the cozy apartment, where everything was neat and clean. The sunshine poured in through two curtained windows and lit up the various articles of bric-a-brac and furniture that filled the room, the most prominent of the latter being two polished brass bedsteads that stood against the opposite wall. On the floor was a trunk half unpacked.

"Mr. Landon has been here, and will probably be back in a few moments. He will help to get you settled," said Mrs. Hollis.

"That won't be much trouble," answered Brad, as he put down his valise.

Mrs. Hollis surveyed him from head to foot.

"And so that's all the baggage you bring. Well, well, it's plain you've never been to school, as the doctor said. You'll have many things to get."

"All right," said Brad cheerfully. "I'll send to Mr. Parker for some money tomorrow and get everything that is needed."

"Who is Mr. Parker?" asked the old lady.

"An old, old friend who looks after my fortune for me," answered Brad with a laugh. "By that I mean all the savings I have been able to make in the last six years. I have always banked with him. It hasn't been enough to make him uneasy."

"Mr. Mattoon, I like your looks," said the old lady frankly; "but you are precious little like the run of young men we have here."

"Yes, I'm afraid I'm a strange fish in this tank," rejoined Brad, as he thought of his encounter in the lower hall.

"Oh, you will get over that feeling soon enough, and grow to like us all," said Mrs. Hollis kindly.

"Who were those young men at the door down stairs, as we came out of the reception room?" asked Brad.

"One of them was Mr. Brayton Arkell. He comes from Philadelphia, and belongs to a very wealthy family. The other was Mr. Sidney Ivers, the son of Mr. Gordon Ivers, who now owns the Hosmer estate. Why do you ask?" The tones of the old lady indicated that she half suspected what had occurred.

"Well, I don't think it is likely I shall fall in love with either of them, that's all," answered Brad.

"Don't make enemies unnecessarily—they come fast enough," said Mrs. Hollis sagely. "Now I'll be off to look up Mr. Landon for you. If you ever want my help at any time, you will usually find me in the room at the head of the hall on the next floor."

Picking up a crumpled towel from a chair near by, the old lady went out, and Brad was left alone in his new quarters.

"Well," he said to himself, as he walked to the window and looked out, "I may like this place mighty well after all—nice house, nice, big grounds—a fair sized lake over there—probably good sailing in the spring. Plenty of company, and, I dare say, most of the lads are easy to get along with, in spite of the poor samples I started in with down stairs. Yes, I shouldn't wonder if I made up my mind to stay."

Brad was silent a moment; then he broke into a short laugh.

"My, oh my, but wouldn't Bill Scott stare if he saw me now," he continued. "Well, why shouldn't he? If he had told me eight months ago, while we were hanging on for dear life to the mainmast of the Cinderella during the nor'easter we breasted off Cape Hatteras—if he had told me then that I would be shut up today in a little cubby hole of a bedroom at an academy, bent on trying to get an education, I'd have said he was crazy—"

At this moment Brad heard hasty footsteps in the hallway, which put a stop to his reflections. He turned gladly, in the expectation of seeing his friend and roommate Perry Landon.

But it was not Perry Landon. It was Sidney Ivers; and, from the manner in which he entered, his flushed face, angry expression, and clinched fists, it was plain that he meant trouble—and serious trouble too.

Brad emitted a low whistle of surprise; then, leaning against the wall, he surveyed his visitor coolly, and awaited developments.

(To be continued.)

A SHOP ON WHEELS.*

BY WALTER F. BRUNS.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

THE "shop on wheels" is a peddler's wagon, owned by "Uncle" Jim Bolton, which Dick Richards and Chub Matthews offer to run while Mr. Bolton is laid up by an accident. He has been run over by Andy Mason, the son of a rival peddler, and when the latter hears that the boys are to take "Uncle Jim's" wagon out for him, he is very angry, and having made an especially early start, takes pains to spread an ugly report about them all along his route. But this is not the only hindrance the young peddlers find in their path. They fall in with some tramps, who steal their wagon and cause them no end of trouble. They are aided in their fight against them, however, by Jack Walters, a young fellow whom they have picked up along the road. They then escape from the tramps and fall in with some farmers who are about to start on a hunt after a circus tiger. They join this party, shoot the tiger, and in endeavoring to find their way back to the farm where they have left their wagon, go astray, are overtaken by a storm and seek refuge in a lonely house, where grudging hospitality is offered them by a woman called Moll. During the night they hear suspicious noises, start out to investigate, and are discovered by some men who have been at work in the cellar, one of whom proves to be a member of the gang with whom they have already had such unpleasant experiences. The boys are placed in another room, supposed to be more secure, but they succeed in wrenching off the bars at the window, and are planning to let themselves down from it when footsteps are heard approaching. They have gone too far to retreat now, and resolve to fight. Chub stands by the door, holding aloft a board that they have torn from the floor and used as a battering ram on the window bars.

CHAPTER XXIII.

HOW FREEDOM WAS WON.

IT seemed an age to the waiting boys, from the time the newcomer drew the first bolt until the door opened and Roper's head appeared. He had not time to utter a word, so suddenly did the board descend, and before Roper regained consciousness he was firmly tied with bands hastily manufactured from sacks.

"So far we are all right," said Jack gleefully, as he carefully closed the door. "Now we must make haste, or they might think something was wrong, and then we would have our hands full."

"If they would come one by one, and give us time," remarked Dick, "I wouldn't be surprised if we were too much for them."

"They wouldn't be so accommodating," replied Jack. "Now, if you are ready, come on for the last bar."

And as the third bar was driven from its fastenings, Roper revived, took in the situation at a glance and started to yell, when Chub raised the board and said threateningly:

"If you dare to cry out, you catch it!"

"I wasn't goin' to," whined Roper, changing his mind.

"I'm glad to learn they left a little sense in you when they knocked your face out of joint," observed Chub. "By the way, it strikes me that there is a man here that bears a slight resemblance to you."

"No doubt," retorted Roper.

"How did you happen to come here, any way?"

"A feller's got a right to come home, ain't he?" demanded the tramp.

"Oh!" cried Dick. "That accounts for the picture in the front room. I know who it favors now. And the man called Dinny is your father, eh?"

"Just so," acquiesced Roper. "An' the lady that let you in is my mother. Now, is there anything else you want to know?"

"Yes," replied Jack. "What are they doing in the cellar?"

Roper closed his sightless eye, stuck out his tongue and replied saucily:

"Find out."

"We haven't time at present," said Jack. "Help me rip open some of these sacks, Chub, for a rope to lower ourselves with."

And while the two were thus occupied, Dick stood guard.

"In which direction is the main road from here?" he asked of Roper.

"Foller up the creek," replied Roper shrewdly.

"It is safe to infer that he is lying," spoke up Chub. "At any rate, I'll take the responsibility, and we will go in the other direction."

When the rope was completed and lowered, and everything ready for an abrupt leave, Jack turned to Roper and said:

"We are going to leave now, and to speak candidly, I shall be happy when I am where I won't be able to look at you. You can shout and whistle as much as you please after we are gone, but don't try it on while we are about, for you stand a good show of getting hurt."

"You fellers are gittin' so flossy it's liable to rub off," Roper ground out. "If I ever see you agin, an' I hope I will, I'll give you a rap on the head an' make sure of you."

"I suppose that is because we rapped you on the head, eh?" questioned Chub. "You shouldn't lay up a little thing like that. If we were that kind, we would apply a match before we left."

"Don't you do it," pleaded Roper, his face turning as white as flour. "We'd be blowed to kingdom come inside of —"

And then he stopped and bit his lips, as though he had said too much.

"What would do all that blowing?" asked Jack quickly.

"Never you mind," retorted Roper.

"Come on, boys," went on Jack, and he crawled out of the window and began lowering himself to the ground. Dick followed, and finally Chub's portly body descended.

Roper began to shout lustily the moment they disappeared from view, and Dick said hurriedly:

"Keep right up the hill into the timber, until we are out of sight, and then we can take our time. If this is the direction to the main road, we were going the wrong way yesterday."

"If the other three men are in the house, and it is safe to suppose they are," said Chub, "we can expect to be pursued. Dillon will make some attempt to stop us, for he thinks we know too much."

"Hold on," suddenly ordered Dick, a few minutes later. "Keep back of this clump of trees and look in the road."

"They are gunning for us already," said Jack. "That is Roper and Bill, and now that he has a gun and a slouch hat, he is the very picture of the fellow that warned us off yesterday. The gun Roper carries, even at this distance, looks like the one Lige loaned me."

"I wish we had taken that fellow's warning," sighed Chub. "We would not have lost so much time, and we would have our shooting irons, too!"

Roper and Bill were walking briskly up the road, and the boys dodged from tree to tree and kept them in sight. They finally stopped, looked up and down the road, scrutinized both sides of the little valley, and after a lengthy argument, slowly retraced their steps.

From Roper's actions the boys concluded he was for pushing on, but Bill was of the other opinion, and finally carried the day.

"Now there is nothing to stop us," exclaimed Jack, after the two had disappeared. "I haven't the least idea that they are going to stop hunting for us, and the sooner we leave the neighborhood the better."

"It won't take long to do that after we reach the wagon," Dick replied. "Let's take the road; we can walk better, and there is no danger if we keep our eyes open."

"I am so certain there is something unlawful being done in that house," remarked Chub, "that I think the best thing we can do will be to notify the officers in the next town."

"And be detained, and perhaps have to come back here with them," replied Dick. "We have lost over a day now, and Mason is probably way ahead by this time."

"Can't help it," responded Chub sturdily. "It's our duty. We can tell them any way. Perhaps that will be all there will be to it; but I feel as if I wanted a little revenge for my rifle."

"Then don't tell the farmer anything about it," warned Jack, "or he will peddle it all over the surrounding country and they will take the alarm and skip."

"And our guns, too," added Chub savagely.

The farmer was working about the barn when the boys arrived, and the moment he saw them, he called out:

*B-gun in No. 428 of THE ARGOSY.

"Hello, there! I 'bout give you up. Where you been?"

"Visiting," replied Dick, and then hastening to change the subject, he continued: "Did you find the tiger?"

"You bet, an' he was a beauty! We found him an' waited around there for you till we like to got caught in the rain. The showman offered twenty five for him to stuff, an' fifty for him alive, an' Lucas 'lowed we'd better raise the money so's not to keep you waitin' till I can take him in. Lord knows we're glad he's dead!"

"Hi, you, Lige!" he shouted. "Tell your maw to give you that money an' these fellers' handkerchief."

"You'd better take something for your trouble," said Dick, "and also for that gun you lent Jack. We left it at the house where we stopped."

"The gun was a muzzle loader, an' not much account," he said, reflectively, and then he handed them seventeen dollars, saying, "I am satisfied if you are."

To the boys it was like picking it up in the road, except for the fact that it rightfully belonged to them, and they were well pleased.

"It'll be hard pullin' through the mud," remarked the farmer, as the boys hitched up; "but your horse, have had a good rest an' plenty of feed, an' they oughter stand it."

A few minutes later they were once more on the road.

CHAPTER XXIV.

INFORMING.

"WE are getting on famously," observed Chub, after they had made a very profitable sale at a farmhouse. "Besides the profit on the goods, there will be seventy seven dollars on outside business. I believe we will make more money on this trip than Uncle Jim would."

"We will, unless we meet with some disaster," Dick replied; and after that the boys talked over past, present, and future, until they reached the next town, which was rather large sized, and Dick drove up to the court house.

"Now, Chub is the most anxious for revenge," said Dick, with a grin, "and I propose that he shall do the talking. Walk in, young man, and we will wait in the hall. If there is any way out of it, remember we are not to go back."

Chub did not like the proposition at all; but he was the one who had proposed the informing, and he went into the office like a man going to the scaffold, while the other two interested themselves reading the legal notices posted on the wall.

"Look at the 'rewards,'" said Jack. "Here is one that declares the State would like to lay hands on one Sam Jordan, who borrowed a horse without the owner's knowledge, and will pay fifty dollars for the privilege."

"There is a larger one," added Dick. "Five hundred dollars reward for information that will lead to the arrest and conviction of party or parties engaged in illicit distilling, etc., somewhere in the surrounding county."

"Here is another that is a beauty," went on Jack. "A man who signs his name Radway with a small 'r,' wishes to inform the public that he is indescribably lonely during the absence of his nephew, who left without his knowledge, but with a bullseye watch, and that he will pay five dollars for his apprehension, or the return of the stolen property or a part thereof. He must be hard up for a watch. Some poor chap he has worked about to death, I expect!"

At this moment a man emerged from the office and hurried away, and, not a long while after Chub came out with a very dubious countenance.

"Well?" interrogated Dick.

"We're in for it," Chub replied dolefully. "There was a secret service chap in there, and the moment I began my little tale he colored me."

"Do we have to go back?" asked Jack.

"Of course. You'd better put the team in a livery stable. They have sent out to scare up a posse now. He questioned me a whole lot, but I haven't found out yet what those fellows in the house are doing, yet he seems to know. You've both got to come in and face the music."

The gentleman who was conducting the proceedings answered to the name of Hart, and after Jack and Dick had been closely questioned, their replies corroborating Chub's story, the peddling wagon was sent to a livery stable, and, turning to a deputy, he said:

"Have the men ready at the edge of the town, and take care that you don't attract too much attention. These fellows are shrewd ones, or they wouldn't have been able to work so close to town as long as they have. Bring three extra horses for these boys."



THE FIGHT HAD NOW BEGUN IN EARNEST.

The result of it all was that at dusk the boys were riding rapidly in the direction they had come, in company with Mr. Hart. When they reached the outskirts of town, eight men dropped quietly in behind, and the party rode along the country road at a lope.

"You say it is about six miles?" asked Hart.

"I judge it is about that distance," Dick replied.

And then there was silence for a time, until Hart continued:

"I would like to catch them at work. I believe you said there were both bolts and chains on the front door?"

"Yes, sir," answered Dick; "and I think it very improbable that you can effect an entrance without alarming them. In fact, you may experience considerable difficulty in getting in at all."

"Oh, we will get in," said Hart confidently. "We dare not give them time to destroy the evidences, if that is possible. The fact is,"

he added, in a low, confidential tone, "some of our men are old hands, and a few of them are not. I don't know how the green ones will work under fire."

"Under fire!" repeated Dick, in dismay. "Is there going to be any shooting?"

"Bound to be more or less," returned Hart coolly. "Generally the people engaged in this kind of work are desperate characters, and shooting won't trouble them if they think they can save themselves from the pen. I've taken places of this kind without a shot being fired, and then again we have blazed away at each other until they were starved out. In a well regulated gang, where they have provisions laid by, that means several days."

So you see the boys did not relish the adventure at all, although they rode stoutly on.

"You are sure we haven't passed the road?" questioned Hart anxiously. "It is growing very dark."

"It is still ahead," Chub reassured him.

A few minutes later they turned into the road, but had not proceeded far before Hart called a halt, and said sharply:

"This will never do. The horses are making entirely too much noise among the rocks, and on a still night it can be heard a long distance. Broadwell, take charge of the animals, and wait until you get the signal or we return."

The little band dismounted, and, leaving the man on guard, they started down the road, Hart observing presently:

"Maxwell, you *must* lift your feet higher. You never will make a success in this business!"

And Maxwell, the poor unfortunate who struggled to steer clear of the stones, and always managed to stumble over them, retired in mortification to the rear.

"Now, how far down this road is the house?" asked Hart.

"About a mile and a half," responded Jack promptly.

Nothing more was said until the building was reached. It stood silent and dark, hardly distinguishable from the road, and the boys began to fear it was deserted.

Hart carefully stationed his men, completely surrounding the house, with a word of advice to each.

"Be careful not to fire at the house until you get the order. Don't let any one run between you. Shoot if necessary, but not until you have called to them to halt."

Then he cautiously tried the doors and windows, and finding them securely fastened, he hammered on the front door with the summons:

"Open in the name of the law!"

"Law be hanged!" retorted a gruff voice from within, showing that the enemy were on the alert. "Keep your hands off that door."

And Hart stepped to one side, just as a heavy charge from a gun tore its way through the panel. Had he not moved when he did he would have taken no further interest in the fight.

"The fight has begun in earnest now," said Hart, coming up to the boys, who had stationed themselves behind trees, "and I look for a desperate resistance. It depends upon their strength and situation how long it will last; but I hope to get away with them before morning. Fighting at night is dangerous enough, but in daylight it is worse. You can go back to town now if you like, but by remaining you can be of some assistance."

After consultation with the others, Dick told him:

"We have decided to remain and watch the fight. We will do anything to help you out that is not foolhardy."

"Thank you," replied Hart. "In case we get the worst of it and I have to send for reinforcements, if you would undertake the task, it will be like giving me an extra man, for you would take the place of the one I would have to send."

"Very well."

And the boys heard him tell the man nearest them:

"Be ready to fire at the word. Aim for the windows, and be particular to move after each shot, or you are liable to stop what is sent at the flash."

CHAPTER XXV.

AN EXCITING FIGHT.

AFTER Hart had visited each man, the order to fire was given; but as near as could be learned no one was hurt, and the reply came in the shape of the rapid discharge of a double barrel on each side.

The buckshot flew uncomfortably near to the boys, and, hugging close to the tree, Dick said:

"Whew! Those came close! It is going to be warm work if it continues until tomorrow. Hart doesn't seem to have a grain of Duffy's disposition."

"Who is Duffy?" asked Jack.

"That brilliant officer we employed to get the wagon away from Roper and Foxy," Chub replied. "I don't consider myself brave, but I can stand more shooting than he could."

Several volleys were fired in the windows, but it was only a waste of ammunition, and Hart decided to try another plan. He picked out the trusty men and sent them to the front, leaving the green ones to guard the rear.

"I don't know whether it will work until we try it," he told the boys. "Will one of you go up the road until you can make him hear, and give three long whistles? That is the signal for Broadwell to come on. You can stop him at a safe distance and picket the horses where you can keep an eye on them. Every man counts now."

"I'll go," volunteered Jack, and he sped up the road.

Hart waited impatiently until Broadwell made his appearance, and after instructing him, he was sent to the rear to aid the two men stationed there.

A few minutes later there was a crashing of glass, a few scattered shots, and then a regular volley, and it sounded as though an entrance had been effected.

Shouts and cries could be heard from within, and during the broil Hart cried "Now!" and the five men, with himself in the lead, left the shelter of the trees and advanced rapidly on the house.

Thus between two fires, it looked as though they had the besieged at a disadvantage. A pole shattered the sash and glass of the front window from top to bottom, and the men began to scramble in, but a stiff fire from within caused them to scramble out more rapidly.

One of the men had a bullet in the shoulder, and a number were scratched. The ruse had failed.

"Confound those fellows!" cried Hart savagely, as they halted beneath the trees. "They fight well. Are you sure there are no more than four?"

"That is all we saw," replied Chub. "Supposing that Foxy came afterward, there would be five and a woman."

"That makes six, for the woman can probably shoot as well as the men. It looks now as though we would have to depend on starvation."

At this moment Broadwell approached and said:

"What are we to do? Murphy is shot in the neck and Carroll in the side. Those fellows seem to be evenly divided, half in front and half in the back. They fight like fiends."

"Are the men hurt badly?" asked Hart.

"Murphy is standing guard. His wound is only a scratch, but Carroll is hit hard."

"If he is able to sit on a horse," said Hart, "we will send him back to town, and order more men and provisions."

And when Carroll was lifted upon one of the animals, Dick and Jack agreed to accompany him, and the three started, leaving Chub to remain and distinguish himself.

Hart made a tour of inspection around the house, which was silent and dark, and but for the exciting time a few minutes before, one would have thought it deserted.

"There is something that strikes me as strange," he said to Chub "They have no well."

"Perhaps they use the water from the creek," suggested Chub.

"I don't think so," replied Hart. "I have thought it over, and come to the conclusion there must be a spring under the house—in the cellar, for instance—and in that case this starving out process is liable to last quite a time."

"I would like to offer a suggestion," remarked Chub.

"You may," returned Hart quickly.

"The cellar under this house must be of good size, for when we stood in the sitting room the sounds were directly beneath us. There are but two windows on the other side, on the lower floor; situated such a distance apart that to fire at a point immediately between them, close to the house, one would have to lean out a window."

"Exactly; that is plain enough," said Hart. "What are you trying to get at?"

"Just this. The house is old and so is the foundation, which is all that separates us from the cellar. If a man crawled up there with a

sharp instrument, it wouldn't take long to pick what little mortar there is away from a rock, and a hole large enough could soon be made."

"And we could enter by the cellar and be among them before they knew what was up," added Hart. "It is a good idea, but it sounds risky, knowing that is only a question of time before they will be forced to submit. However, I am going to try it."

Broadwell was sent to skirmish in the rear, in search of a tool that would do the work, and finally returned with an old, rusty pick.

"Keep a strong guard on front and rear," ordered Hart; "and also a couple of men to watch these windows and protect me. You'd better start the firing again, that it may drown the noise I make."

Hart would send no one where he would not go himself, and after the firing began he crawled slowly toward the house, while Chub and the two men watched his movements in anxious suspense.

(To be continued.)

HASHED CONVERSATIONS.

HAVE our readers never noticed a singular lack in the English language? When a friend imparts to you a surprising piece of information you must be especially brilliant if you can think of anything more appropriate to say than the inane "You don't say so?" or "Is that so?" as if you doubted his word. These "fillers in" of conversation are troublesome trifles; but not more so than the "five minute hypocries" of which Caroline Gray Lingle writes in the following sprightly fashion in *Kat Field's Washington*:

There are circumstances under which it is difficult to be felicitous. Did you ever overhear a brilliant remark in a railway station or a hotel parlor? The cleverest of talkers takes refuge under such circumstances in the flattest inanities. It would be sweet sorrow to part from one's best friend, after spending with him an hour waiting for a train. Your most painful efforts to make the interview satisfactory are absolutely nullified by the involuntary wanderings of your eye to the slow moving hands of the clock, and even the consciousness of this weakness in yourself does not make more forgivable a similar tendency in your companion. Conversation travels in a dreary circle, reviewing the incidents of the last meeting and the possibilities of a next, broken here and there by an entirely useless message to some common friend. On every side you can hear shreds and patches of similar dialogues till reason totters on her throne, and the harsh voice of the trainman who breaks up the interview with the announcement of the departing cars sounds sweeter than an angelic trumpet.

Writers of fiction never part their lovers in a railway station. They know better than to pretend that the most intense of sentimental interests would survive a quarter of an hour in such an atmosphere. The tenderness of parting phrases would lack spontaneity if held carefully in reserve until just thirty seconds before the train starts; but how else could it be effectively delivered, since to say it too soon and have it followed by silence or some less significant utterance would be as fatal as to begin it too late and have it cut short by the rue cry of "All aboard!"

Whoever has tried to revive an old friendship in a hotel parlor, knows that, in nine cases out of ten, the effort results in only a decent burial of it. Strive as you may, the talk degenerates into generalities as glittering and meaningless as the decorations of the room; and the comrade whom you would have found unchanged in the house of a friend, or more than ever delightful as a guest of your own, awakens within you no feeling but one of hopeless ennui.

The difficulty arises from the vague consciousness that with so little time to enjoy the society of your companion you should make the best possible use of every minute of it. The sense of obligation paralyzes both the mental and emotional faculties. To be silent seems to imply a certain lack of appreciation of the opportunity, so you say perforce whatever you find in the re-echoing spaces of your empty brain. Why should the brain always be empty at such a time? The only explanation which occurs to me is that the surroundings, which are evidently responsible for the trouble, are not of the sort to permit mental repose, while they are equally inadequate to suggesting ideas.

Another moment hardly less agonizing is the one in which you meet an old acquaintance in the street. You have nothing to say, neither has he, but either of you would as soon die as to admit that a simple greeting would entirely satisfy you. From the time you say, "Why, good morning," to the instant in which one of you gathers courage to say, "Well, good by," you run a long career of conscious hypocrisy. You speak of the weather, of your relatives, or your common friends; you wish you could honestly say you are in a hurry, but you never are. The same remarks show a perverse tendency to come around again, and there is no more possibility of concealing their identity than there is that of the extra tall "supe" in the stage army as he passes across the scene for the third time. The one satisfactory part of the interview is the blissful moment when you yield to temptation and plead an engagement in which only the first person is at all concerned.

Of course it is quite unavoidable. You wish to testify to your general regard for your friend, and this is the only way open to you. Both of you know very well that such odds and ends of time cannot be used by most people for satisfactory human intercourse, but this does not deter you from making the attempt. Only here and there is your friend's mind so perfectly adjusted to your own that, meeting him in Texas, you could begin conversation at once with: "As I was saying to you three years ago when we parted in Japan—"

TWIRLING BOWLDER DISCOVERED.

MANY are familiar with the story of the little girl, who, upon seeing a foppishly dressed young man, commonly called "dude," asked if God made him, and upon being informed that that was the case, remarked, "God likes

to have some fun, too; doesn't he?" Nature is often curious in her moods, as witness the following phenomenon related by the Philadelphia *Ledger*:

There has been discovered about half a mile west of the "Bargytown Ledges," in Connecticut, a twirling stone of about five tons' weight. It has always been regarded as a bowlder, and from the way it is poised on the rock beneath it no one could see why it should not rock.

Hundreds have tried to rock it in vain, and the surprise of the man who first felt it move under pressure may be imagined.

It moves hard, of course, but it moves as if it was placed on a pivot. It has been carefully examined, and, while it looks like a bowlder, several allege that it must be a ceremonial stone, set there by some prehistoric race.

This rock is creating great interest among the bowlder hunters of Eastern Connecticut.

ABOUT THAT MANHATTAN SALE.

ACCORDING to popular tradition, the Island of Manhattan was sold in 1624 for the sum of \$25. The conclusion one would naturally jump to would be that, in the light of subsequent events, the sum was a ridiculously small price. But let us suppose that \$25 had been placed out at seven per cent. interest in the year 1624, and had been allowed to compound up to the year 1884, how much would it then have amounted to? According to the *Pharmaceutical Era* it would foot up to something in the neighborhood of sixteen hundred million dollars.

Is the Island of Manhattan worth much more than that today?

THE SPIDER STOPPED THE METER.

THE superintendent of a Chicago electric light station gives a strange instance of the stopping of a meter and the explanation of the trouble.

On examining the meter, which was of twenty eight capacity, after a lapse of a month, in order to determine the quantity of current to be charged for, he found that the consumer, in the pressure of business, had placed a number of small boxes around the meter, concealing it from view.

As it was desirable not to disturb them, it was suggested, and agreed to that the meter be allowed to run another month. At the end of the second month, says the *Chicago Times*, the coast being clear, the meter was examined, and it was found that it recorded only five hours since the time of last examination.

This looked suspicious, but there was no ground to believe that the meter had been tampered with.

A very close inspection revealed the fact that a spider had spun its web around the fans so that they could not rotate under the action of the current.

It appears that the screws which held the cover to the top of the instrument had not been put in, and that the spider had taken advantage of the opening and established himself in the cozy quarters.

HOW KNIGHTS ARE MADE.

THERE is nothing imposing in the ceremony of conferring the order of knighthood at the hands of Queen Victoria. It is not, in fact, a public ceremony. Only those are permitted to witness it who, by their official connection with the queen's household, may attend her. The loyal subject upon whom such distinguished honor is conferred may not even invite his "best man," nor a relative or friend, to witness the ceremony described as follows in London *Tid-Bits*:

Arrayed in whatever uniform he may be entitled to wear, or whatever dress court etiquette and the time of day make proper if he be a civilian, the subject presents himself before his sovereign and kneels at her royal feet. Seated on the throne chair, the queen lays the shining blade of a sword across the shoulder of the kneeling but exalted beneficiary, and says, using the title which she is about to give: "Arise, Sir So-and-so."

Plain Mr. Cheltenham Brown is thus, by a single stroke of her majesty's sword, transferred into Sir Knight, and he is permitted, perchance, to kiss his sovereign's fingertips in general acknowledgment of the distinguished honor. In other cases than this of a plain knighthood, and when the title carries with it a decoration, the gracious queen, with her own royal hands, pins the glittering and much coveted bauble upon the coat of her elevated subject. This is all the ceremony connected with the conferring of knighthood, but it is a great deal to the recipient.

NEITHER WRITTEN NOR PRINTED.

THE Prince de Ligne is the possessor of a curiosity of literature. It is a book that is neither written nor printed.

"How can that be?" you ask.

Well, the letters are all cut out of the finest vellum and pasted on blue paper. The book is as easy to read as if printed from the clearest type, says the *Illustrated American*. The precision with which these small characters are cut excites infinite admiration for the patience of the author. The book, by the way, bears the title "Libers Passiones Nostri Jesu Christi, cum characteribus nulla materia composita. The Book of the Passion of Our Jesus Christ, with characters not composed of any material."

The German Emperor Rudolph II. is said to have offered in 1640 the enormous sum of eleven thousand ducats for this work of art. Strangely enough, the book bears the English arms, though it is supposed never to have been in England.

EXCEPTING WHEN THE MOUSE RUNS IN.

FIRST VASSAR STUDENT—"Say, girls, there's one thing we've forgotten. We haven't any college yell. All colleges have yells, you know."

SECOND STUDENT—"Why, of course. Strange we never thought of it. Let's have one."

THIRD STUDENT—"But I don't see how we can yell without taking the gum out of our mouths."

FOURTH STUDENT—"Let's let the yell go. It isn't very lady like, anyhow." —*Ex.*



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Have you taken advantage of our grand premium offer on page 2 of the cover? The present is a good number with which to canvass for new readers, as it contains the opening chapters of a new story, and "Train and Station" began only two weeks back—in No. 434. These numbers can still be supplied. Start your club at once, earn a snug sum of pocket money, and try to win one of our superb bicycles.

* * * *

HOW TO BE HAPPY.

OUR grandfathers used to say that there is one place where happiness can always be found, and that place is in the dictionary. Probably many boys, and girls, too, would be glad if they had a life ticket to a circus. That would be pleasure, but, like a mushroom, it would live and die in a day. Lasting happiness comes only to those who have the satisfaction of knowing that they have done something well. Aim to accomplish some noble deed. Never stop till you have succeeded in your efforts, and you will then know what it is to be happy.

* * * *

A MISPLACED ELEPHANT.

WHEN Humpty Dumpty, in the nursery rhyme, fell off the wall, we have Mother Goose for authority that not all the king's horses nor all his majesty's men could get the individual with the catchy name up again. This episode is recalled by an incident of an exactly opposite nature which occurred in New York City a few weeks ago.

A certain dealer in wild animals has among his collection an elephant answering to the romantic name of Fanchon. Now Fanchon was in training for the circus, and one day, when the coast was clear, she did a little practicing on her own account by breaking away from her chain and staple and making her way up a stairway which had no doubt piqued her curiosity ever since her arrival in the metropolis. But this stairway led, not to freedom, but to the apartments of a Mrs. Brown, who was greatly terrified, on stepping into her kitchen to behold an elephant in possession.

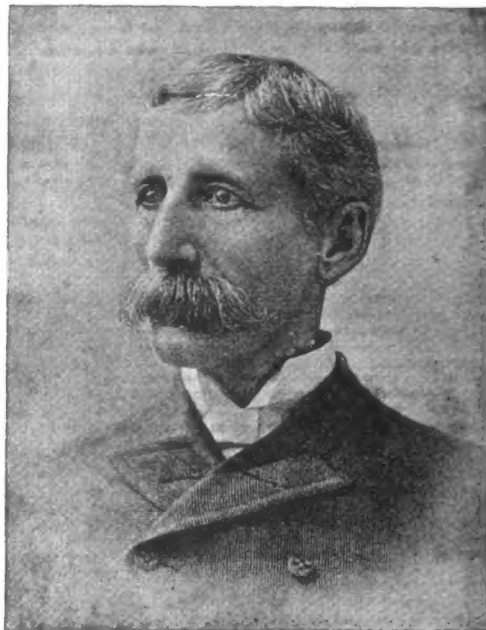
She promptly alarmed the neighborhood, the police were summoned and telegrams sent all over town after Fanchon's trainer. But neither the neighborhood, the police, nor the trainer were able to get the elephant down again, as descending a stairway had not been included in the curriculum according to which Miss Fanchon had been educated. And it was not until four days had elapsed and an inclined plane had been built out of the second story window into the street that this troublesome elephant could be restored to her own quarters. And even then this was not accomplished without calamity, for she knocked her trainer into the street and herself slipped from the planking, falling, fortunately, on some bales of hay that had been hastily rolled out to receive her.

JOHN R. MCPHERSON,

SENATOR FROM NEW JERSEY.

THE possibilities open to American boys are boundless. On this fact rests one of our country's strongest claims to the liberty which is its citizens' proudest boast. Even the humblest may aspire; indeed, more often than not, it is from these ranks that the nation's leaders are recruited.

In the monarchical countries of Europe it is: What is there back of



JOHN R. MCPHERSON.

From a photograph by Bell, Washington.

the man? That is, has he come of a fine family? Here we say: What is there in the man that will make him capable of dealing with that which lies in front of him—with the live issues of the present? Ancestry and environment are no bar in America to the promotion of one who shows that he is deserving of it.

A score of years ago the subject of this sketch was a butcher in Jersey City; now he is representing his constituency for the third time in the Senate. And as stepping stones to this high position, he has filled many other offices of trust and honor.

John Rhoderic McPherson was born in York, Livingston County, New York, on the 9th of May, 1833. After his schooling was finished he removed to Jersey City, where he entered upon the business of butcher, as already stated. While thus engaged he was made alderman, and in this capacity served the city for six years, half that time as president of the board. He was also for two years president of the People's Gas Light Company.

From 1871 to 1873 he was at Trenton, representing his district in the State Senate, and in 1876 was a Presidential elector on the celebrated Tilden-Hendricks ticket. He was elected to his present office in 1876, as a Democrat, to succeed F. T. Frelinghuysen, a Republican. His subsequent re-elections in 1883 and 1889 furnish unquestionable proof of his ability as one of the nation's law makers.

An admirable trait in Senator McPherson's character is his democratic spirit. Having succeeded, through indomitable courage and tireless efforts, in climbing from the lowest round to the top rungs of the ladder of life, he knows from personal experience the struggles through which an ambitious young man must pass before attaining success in the world, and he never fails to extend a warm friendship to those who are aiming high, whatever their station in life.

WILLIS B. MATTHEWS.

TRAIN AND STATION;

OR,

THE RAMBLES OF A YOUNG RAILROADER.*

BY EDGAR R. HOADLEY, JR.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE TRAIN ORDER AT BOYER.

THOUGH he had been knocked from his seat by the concussion of the colliding engine and the heavy team standing across the track, Dash received no serious bodily injury, though he was considerably shaken up and bruised. As soon as he realized that he still had a whole skin and no bones were broken, he sprang to his feet and looked about him.

The engine was still on the rails, coming slowly to a stop, and the doctor was clinging desperately to the frame work of the cab on the fireman's side. Some yards in the rear were the splintered fragments of the wagon, scattered on both sides of the track, and the two quivering horses standing near by, strange to say, uninjured. No signs of a human being could be discerned amid the wreck, or anywhere near by.

The engine had suffered no damage further than crushing a portion of the pilot, and bending the cross heads. The whole forward end of the locomotive, boiler, headlight, and foot board was covered with a white powdery dust that made it look as if it had been sprinkled with pulverized sugar, like a figure in a confectionery shop.

Dash noticed the curious covering, but in the excitement of the moment indulged in no conjecture as to what it could be.

"Dykeman, but for you I would have been maimed, or perhaps have lost my life," began the surgeon in grateful tones.

"I'm glad you did as I told you," responded the boy. "I knew you stood a better chance by sticking to the machine. We were going too fast for a jump to be safe, and I calculated the engine, being the heavier body, would clear the track with little or no damage to itself."

"But I guess we've made kindling wood of that wagon," added the doctor, glancing backward.

"Yes; and the first thing for us to do is to ascertain if we've killed or injured any one," continued Dash, as the engine came to a stop.

They got down and hurried back to the scene of the wrecked wagon. The vehicle was splintered and torn so that there was hardly a piece large enough to indicate its part in the construction of the whole. Everything was covered with the white, powder-like substance, which was scattered along the roadbed all the way to the engine.

A closer inspection told Dash that the stuff was flour, the wagon having been loaded with bags of that commodity.

There were no signs of a human being in the vicinity, injured or uninjured, and the first thing Dash did was to secure the two horses, which, having partially recovered from their paralyzed fright, were

starting off. He had hardly done so when three men came running up, with suppressed cries of excitement and dismay.

One of them, who was owner of the team, was so glad to find his horses were uninjured that he treated lightly the loss of the wagon and its contents. Then it was that Dash and the doctor learned how it was he had done the rash and foolhardy thing of leaving his property in such a dangerous position.

To avoid going to the regular crossing, some distance further on, and thus save time, he had tried to cross his loaded team over the tracks. In doing so, one of his wheels had been pulled off, and the end of the axle had fallen down inside the roadbed. Of course he could proceed no further till the axle was lifted over the rail. Not being able to do it alone, having no jack or pry, he had gone off for assistance. He said he felt perfectly safe in doing so, as he knew there was not another train due for half an hour.

"But why in the world didn't you unload your flour and lift the axle over yourself?" queried Dash, surprised at the fellow's stupidity.

"By George! I didn't think of that," the man replied, looking surprised.

But Dash strongly suspected that he had not done so because he did not want to undertake the labor of the unloading.

Then he sharply reprimanded the fellow for attempting to cross the tracks at any place other than the regular roadway, and wound up by trying to impress upon him something he no doubt did not know—that extra trains and engines, besides the regular ones, were liable to come along at any time, and that his carelessness and ignorance were a menace to life.

The man was thoroughly frightened and penitent, and when Dash and the doctor left him, he and his two companions were endeavoring to gather up the contents of the burst bags of flour.

In a few moments they were again on the switch engine, speeding towards the freight yards. Notwithstanding the slight delay occasioned by their thrilling experience, they arrived at the scene of the fatal collision in time for the surgeon to render valuable service in saving the lives of the two injured firemen.

The return to the railway depot was without incident, and was not nearly so much enjoyed as the first part of the trip out. Dash felt sore and bruised, and the nerves of both were considerably shaken.

Dash had hardly taken his place at the operating table to resume his duties when the superintendent came in.

"Who took that engine down to the freight yards and back?" he asked glancing sternly towards Mr. Clikenger.

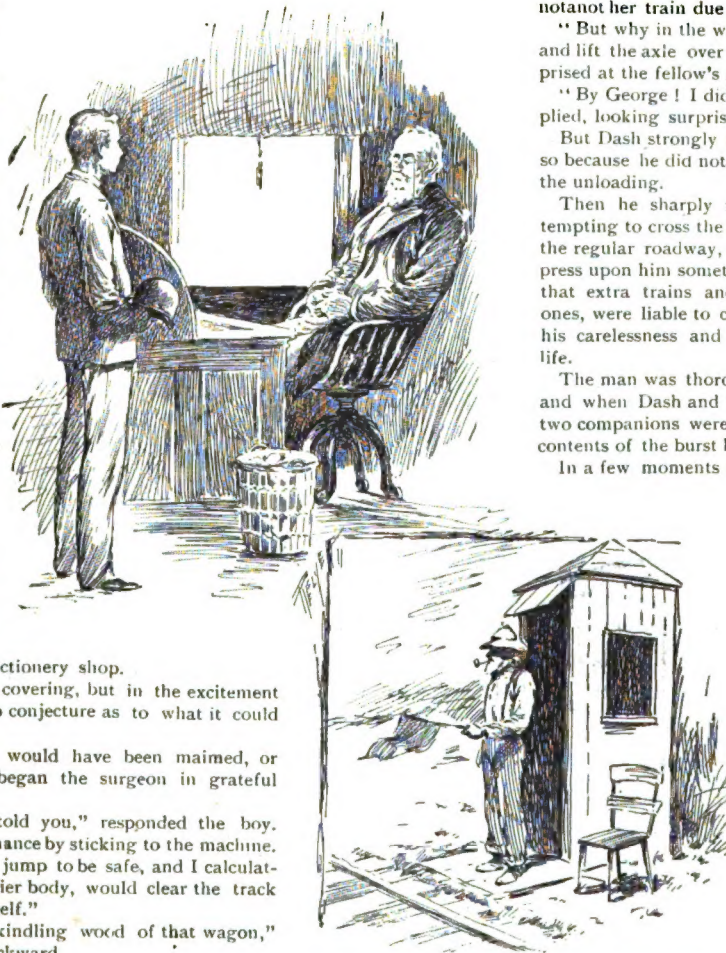
Dash felt uneasy upon hearing the sharp tones, for there seemed disapproval in them; but he tried to quiet himself with the thought that Mr. Clikenger had assumed the responsibility of his action.

"Mr. Dykeman," replied the dispatcher, indicating Dash with a nod of the head.

"What was the reason the regular crew didn't do it? I see them standing around outside."

Mr. Clikenger explained the urgency of the case, and how Dash had unexpectedly offered to do the service when the engineer and firemen could not be found.

"Lay those two men off for ten days, and post a notice that the crew



DASH INTERVIEWS THE SUPERINTENDENT.

*Begun in No. 434 of THE ARGOSY.

of the switch engine shall stay by it when on duty whether it is needed or not," ordered the superintendent with a frown.

"Where did you learn to run an engine, Mr. Dykeman?" he continued, turning to Dash.

"I never learned it practically, sir. Forney's 'Catechism,' and several other books on the locomotive taught me all I know theoretically, and it was not hard to apply it."

"Indeed! You are the first one I ever heard of doing so. You had a little trouble on your run, hadn't you?"

"Yes, sir," replied Dash apologetically, "but it couldn't possibly be helped."

He thereupon gave an account of the collision with the team, and what he had done in the matter.

"Very good. I shall remember you, Mr. Dykeman," said the superintendent briefly, as he turned on his heel and went out.

"You're in luck, Dykeman," remarked Mr. Clikenger. "Old man Barsteel doesn't say much, but he means what he says. He'll put you up a round in the ladder, sure."

"I only did what circumstances threw in my way to do, and I shall not be disappointed if he doesn't."

"You don't want even any cards or *flowers*?" laughed the dispatcher, with an effort at a pun.

"No; I never saw such a fall in bread stuff," rejoined Dash, not to be outdone.

Dash's feat of running the switch engine and the manner in which he had gone through the collision raised him a peg in the estimation of the railroad employees. Among the engineers and firemen especially he was regarded with increased respect, and they esteemed it an honor and a privilege to be acquainted with him. He treasured the words of the superintendent that he would not be forgotten, and though he said he would not be disappointed if he received no reward, he began to build hopes on those words, which, if not realized, would certainly produce bitter dissatisfaction. His prospects seemed bright, he felt the pleasure of duty done, which, indeed, is its own reward, and indulged in many roseate dreams of gratified ambition when he sought his bed that night.

The next day was a dark and stormy one. The wind blew fiercely, carrying sheets of rain that defied the protection of frail umbrellas. Many of the telegraph poles on the line had been blown down, thus mixing up the wires and making it impossible to get a clear circuit with which to operate the trains. Line repairers had been immediately dispatched to remove the trouble; but, as it would take several hours, and perhaps the whole day, the train dispatchers had to do their work as best they could with the facilities left them.

None but the initiated can understand or appreciate the strain on the patience and nerves of a train dispatcher, who is compelled to direct the movement of trains over a badly working wire, which is liable to "open," or become useless, at any moment. And when it is remembered that the slightest mistake on his part may destroy millions of dollars' worth of property and scores of precious lives, it will be seen that he occupies one of the most responsible positions in the service, and that all the heroes are not at the throttle or in the active operation of the trains.

And how few of the millions of travelers over our railroads realize that there is a brain and hand watching and guiding their train to its destination, carefully noting its progress from point to point; and all this in addition to the many modern appliances to insure safety. But errors of judgment, or those of inefficiency, will sometimes creep in and produce an accident, and then there is a wholesale denunciation of the system, the public forgetting the thousands of trains which are handled in safety.

In bad weather the dispatcher is keenly on the alert, for sometimes the wire is liable to transmit what is not intended. It is slow and tedious work then, and if communication is entirely cut off the further movement of trains is left to the discretion of the train men and operators, though there are certain rules governing just such contingencies, and it is one of the written instructions of the railroad, "In case of doubt always take the safe side."

On the morning in question, while Dash was posting the time of arrival of several late trains on the blackboard on the outside of the station, Mr. Clikenger sent an order to two stations, Ardley and Boyer, for the meeting of two passenger trains at a point about midway between them. Ardley had repeated back the order correctly, and he had given his "All right," when Dash came in and resumed his duties.

Then Boyer, the other station, called up the dispatcher's office, and

as was his custom Dash copied the order in the book for that purpose. The order read as follows:

To Cond'r & Eng'r Nos. 6 and 7:

Order No. 1016.

RD and BO

Number six (6) engine six forty seven (647) and Number seven (7) engine five ninety two (592) will meet and pass at Bassets.

(Sig.) WHITE & WADE,
C. & E. No. 7.

"Is Order 1016, to meet and pass at Bassets, all right, Mr. Clikenger?" asked Dash, raising his voice, for the switch engine outside was blowing off steam, and there was considerable noise about the station.

On perceiving a nod of assent from the dispatcher, he gave the "All right," followed by the time and the superintendent's initials.

Forty five minutes later, as Mr. Clikenger was looking over the order book, he pointed his finger to Order 1016, and asked in anxious tones:

"Dykeman, did you receive this order as it is written here—Bassets?"

"Yes, sir; and I asked you if Bassets was all right," replied Dash, a chill of apprehension creeping over him.

"I understood you to say Barrets. *I sent it Barrets.* I fear we are in for it."

"Can't we catch No. 6?" whispered Dash in strained tones, rising to his feet.

"It's too late."

"Good Heavens! Then those two trains will come together! No telling how many people will be killed or injured," cried Dash, as he sank, white faced, into his chair and stared speechlessly at Mr. Clikenger in numbing horror.

"I fear so," responded the other, slowly and soberly, a strained expression deepening about his mouth.

Dash saw that it was no ruse of the dispatcher to try him, and amid the whirl of his agonized thoughts he vaguely wondered if he had copied the order wrong, or the operator at Boyer had repeated it back incorrectly.

An effort was made to catch train No. 6 before it passed Bassets, but the operator there reported it had gone by. As there was no telegraph office at Barrets, there was no possible chance of reaching train No. 7, and a collision seemed inevitable.

CHAPTER IX.

SUSPENDED.

FOR a few moments neither the dispatcher nor Dash spoke a word. To them a strange, oppressive silence appeared to have settled about the station. The tones of the men standing outside talking seemed subdued, and the large clock in the office, the ticking of which at other times was hardly noticeable, gave forth its regular strokes with singular distinctness.

The great timepiece measured with unerring certainty the speeding seconds, as they flew by to that time both the railroad men knew the two trains would probably come together, and to Dash the steady tick took of the swinging pendulum seemed to repeat over and over again, "Too late."

Despite the suspense he was under, he was compelled to continue the discharge of his duties, though he did so in a mechanical manner, with nerves that were not the steadiest.

He wondered over and over again if it could be possible he had made an error in copying the order Bassets instead of Barrets; and he as often reviewed every minute detail of the art of receiving and copying the order, and assured himself he had not. He had acquired such proficiency in his work he could not believe he had made such an error; and yet the names of the two stations were so similar, not only in sound as spoken, but as they were made on the telegraph instrument, he could not help still having a doubt of his accuracy.

If he had made the mistake in receiving the word Bassets instead of Barrets, there would be no collision, and he wished and hoped it might be so, though it would be a serious reflection on his skill and accuracy as an operator; but if the operator at Boyer, who repeated the order back to him, had received it Bassets from Mr. Clikenger instead of Barrets, there undoubtedly would be a catastrophe.

An effort was made to reach the operator at Boyer, to ascertain just how he had received the order and repeated it back, but either the circuit was too bad or he was not at his post, for he did not respond to the call.

bered him even that much; "but I'm determined not to wait sixty days to go to work. In fact, I can't afford it."

"What are you going to do?"

"I don't know yet; that's what I want to ask you about. I have already found out there is no chance for temporary extra work with the commercial companies, and I don't care to go with any other railroad, even if there was an opening, which there is not."

"Why don't you go west?" suggested Mr. Tickmore.

"And grow up with the country," laughed Dash.

"Yes, if necessary. There's more chance for a good operator on the railroads in the west."

"I think I would go if I was sure of getting a situation," decided Dash slowly, as he thought of St. Louis and the possibility of discovering his own father's name. But he disliked the idea of leaving home, and felt some hesitancy about striking out for the first time so far away from his relatives; for, though he had found they were only connections by marriage, they were the only ones he had, and were near and dear to him. And besides, one cannot appreciate the feeling of uneasiness on being thrown out of a position for the first time until he has had the experience. Of course, he argued, he could again take his situation at the end of sixty days; but if he remained idle in the interim, his savings thus far would be almost entirely absorbed. He disliked the idea of seeing them melt away, as it were, and having to begin all over again.

"I think I can assure you of a position as soon as you would arrive in St. Louis, if you would care to go that far," continued Mr. Tickmore.

"It doesn't matter much what place I go to," said Dash, thinking how odd it was the chief operator should name the very city he was thinking of, and had decided to visit some time in the future.

"Then I'll give you a letter to my friend Hummon, who has charge of the telegraph on the largest system of railroads centering in St. Louis, in which is included the St. Louis & Pacific. It would be odd if he put you to work on the latter road, wouldn't it?"

"Yes," replied Dash, remembering that that was the road to which his stepfather was going as superintendent when he was killed.

"By the way, Mr. Tickmore," he continued, "do you think I can get a pass as far as Pittsburg? It will save me considerable if I can."

"I don't know, Dash; I couldn't give it to you under the circumstances. You might ask the superintendent."

"I will; and there's no use losing any time about it," responded Dash, as he prepared to leave. "I'll call for that letter before I start."

He went to the superintendent's office, which was up stairs in the relay station over the telegraph office. The official was one of those who are accessible at all times, and he greeted Dash pleasantly as he appeared before him.

"What can I do for you, Mr. Dykeman?" he asked.

"I would like to get a pass to Pittsburg, sir," replied Dash.

"And return?" queried the superintendent, as he was about to direct the pass to be made out.

Now Dash knew he would have no difficulty in getting a pass as an employee (for he was still considered in the service, though suspended) if he chose to conceal his intention of severing his connection with the company, but he frankly replied:

"No, sir. I don't expect to return—at least not very soon; I am going to leave the service, sir."

"I am sorry to hear that, Mr. Dykeman, for I'm sure you would be a valuable man to us. I regret that unfortunate oversight in the order to Boyer, but I could not well discriminate between you and Mr. Clickenger in fixing the penalty. Can you not wait till the expiration of your suspension? I may be able to do something a little better for you then."

"Thank you," responded Dash, gratified by the kind and commendatory words.

The prospect was a tempting one, but since the idea of going to St. Louis had been suggested to him he had fully decided to act upon it.

"I can't afford to be idle two months," he continued, "and I'm almost sure of a position in St. Louis."

"Suit yourself, Dykeman," concluded the superintendent, and it seemed to Dash that there was a ring of coldness in his tones. "I have done the best I could for you. As for the pass, it is not consistent with our rules to grant one to an employee leaving our service."

Dash returned to Mr. Tickmore's office, the refusal to grant him the pass being somewhat softened by the superintendent's evigent appreciation of his abilities and service.

He had saved about sixty dollars during the few months he had occupied the position of dispatcher's operator, and to pay his fare all the way to St. Louis would take nearly thirty dollars of that sum. A pass to Pittsburg would have saved him nearly half that amount, and it was quite a disappointment to be refused it, though it did not weaken his determination to make the journey.

"Did you get it, Dash?" asked Mr. Tickmore.

"No; he said it was inconsistent with the rules of the company to grant passes to employees leaving the service," was the reply, a little ironically. "I hate to pay fare on this road, and besides, I may need all I've got."

"What in the world did you tell him you were going to leave for? He would have given it to you if you hadn't."

"I wasn't going to use any deception to get it," responded Dash, with dignity.

"You just needn't to have said anything about it; that wouldn't have been deceiving him. I wouldn't have told him, and that's the difference between you and me, Dykeman," laughed the chief operator.

"It would have been deceiving him just the same," insisted Dash, determined to stand by what he considered right.

"You'll get over that when you've railroaded as long as I have. Here's the letter to Hummon I promised you, and I wish I could help you on your way."

"Thank you, Mr. Tickmore," replied Dash, with feeling, and he told himself he would not "get over it" if he railroaded a hundred years. "I can never repay you for all you've done for me."

"That's all right, my boy, don't try; and I wish you success. When do you start?"

"Just as soon as I can get ready."

"Don't fail to let me hear from you when you get settled in the wild and woolly west."

"I shan't," replied Dash, as he started to leave.

"By the way, Dash," interposed Tickmore, "why don't you try one of the conductors? Maybe he will pass you to Pittsburg."

"Thanks; I will."

Dash walked out on the platform, and the first man he met was conductor Freeman, with whom he was acquainted. At the latter was an operator, and more liable to accommodate him, Dash determined to ask him to pass him to Pittsburg.

"Mr. Freeman, I want to go to Pittsburg," he began.

"Well, why don't you go? You've got lots of time," interposed the conductor good humoredly.

"I haven't got any pass."

"Why don't you ask the old man for one?"

"I did, but he wouldn't give it to me. I'm going to leave the company."

"Oh, that's it; and you want me to pass you," said Freeman seriously. "I'm sorry you're going to leave us, Mr. Dykeman, and more sorry to say I'm afraid I couldn't take you. They are getting very strict, and watching us like hawks. If it was known I passed you, after the old man refused to do so, it would be all up with me. I'm afraid I couldn't do it."

"I don't want you to lose your place," responded Dash quickly.

"The only thing I can do now is to pay my way, though I had hoped to be able to save that much."

"I wish I could help you, Mr. Dykeman," began the conductor again, "but—"

"Are you conductor Freeman?" interrupted a boy about fourteen years old.

"Yes," replied the official.

"My brother, Willis Dunker, who runs with you, has been taken suddenly sick, and can't go out tonight," announced the lad, with much concern, and in tones that showed he had been making haste to deliver his message.

"That's bad. What's the matter with him?" asked Freeman.

"The doctor says he's threatened with typhoid fever, and it will be some time before he can go to work again."

"I'm sorry to hear it; but tell him not to worry. I'll see he goes back on his run when he gets well, and will come to see him when I get a chance," said the conductor kindly.

"He was my flagman," he explained, turning to Dash as the boy departed, "and one of the smartest and nicest young fellows I ever had with me. I don't know what I'll do for a man. There are no extras around, and it's only two hours till leaving time. If I was only at the other end of my run, I know a good man I could get."

"Why not take me out on this run, and then you could get your man at the other end," suggested Dash eagerly.

"Do you know the duties of the position?" queried Freeman a little doubtfully.

"Try me and see," smiled Dash.

"All right; I guess you'll do. Be sure to be on hand."

Dash found he would have just time enough to go home and bid his folks a hasty farewell before the hour of departure of the train for the West, and he lost no time in doing so.

He little imagined what a strange series of events would follow on his first and only run as a flagman on an express train.

(To be continued.)

DIGGING FOR GOLD.

A STORY OF CALIFORNIA.*

BY HORATIO ALGER, JR.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED

GRANT COLBURN'S mother has married a miserly farmer—Seth Tarbox—who treats Grant very meanly. But Grant is fortunate enough to save a train from going through a bridge, a purse is made up for him by the passengers, and with this money he decides to try his fortune in the California gold diggings. He starts overland with Mr. and Mrs. Cooper and their son Tom, meets with various adventures, and when their provisions run out and they fear that they must kill and eat their horse Grant discovers a hermit living in a log cabin, whom he takes back with him to the camp. This is Giles Crommont, a wealthy Englishman, who is traveling over, the world to try and forget the disappointment a vagabond son has caused him. He joins Mr. Cooper's party, and supplies them with all his provisions, so that the journey is continued with comfort. On arrival in Sacramento Mr. Cooper buys out a blacksmith's shop and resumes work at his old trade, which is here very remunerative. Tom starts for the mines, and Mr. Crommont goes to San Francisco, while Grant secures a position as waiter in Mr. Smithson's restaurant at a salary of three dollars a day and board. He intends to save enough to take him out to the mines. The other waiter in the establishment, Albert Benton, abstracts money from the cash drawer, and then seeks to throw suspicion on Grant. Mr. Smithson speaks of the matter to a friend of his, Mr. Vincent, an ex-detective, who marks two bills with a red cross, follows Benton one night to a gambling house, succeeds in obtaining the two bills in exchange for gold, and then brings them to Mr. Smithson with his story.

CHAPTER XXI.

ALBERT BENTON IS UNMASKED.

"That's pretty conclusive evidence, isn't it?" said John Vincent, tapping the marked bills.

"I didn't dream of it," said the restaurant keeper.

"I did. I suspected him as soon as you told me he was trying to fasten suspicion upon Grant Colburn."

"You don't think the boy had anything to do with the theft?"

"I feel sure of it. The boy is an honest boy. You have only to look in his face to see that. I haven't been a detective for nothing. I may be mistaken at times, but I can generally judge a man or boy by his face."

"Does Benton know that you suspect him?"

"No. I wasn't going to give myself away. By the way, he had quite a stroke of luck tonight."

"At the gambling house?"

"Yes. At one time he was a winner of nearly or quite five hundred dollars."

"Then he will be able to make up to me the amount he has taken."

"Don't flatter yourself! I said he was a winner of that amount at one time. I didn't say he went out with that sum. As a matter of fact, he lost it all, and left the place probably without a dollar."

Smithson looked disappointed.

"Then," he said, "I shan't get my money back."

"I am afraid not."

"He must have taken hundreds of dollars."

"Quite likely."

"The villain!" exclaimed the restaurant keeper. "And I have paid him so liberally too!"

"Well, Smithson, it might have been worse. I suspect you have a pretty tidy sum laid by."

Smithson's face changed, and he looked complacent.

"Yes, Vincent," he said. "I'm worth a little money."

"Good! Look upon this as a little setback that won't materially affect you, and put it down to the account of profit and loss."

"Very good! I will do so. But tomorrow I will give Mr. Benton his walking ticket."

Albert Benton came to work as usual in the morning. His employer came in half an hour late. By this time the waiter had become re-

signed to his disappointment of the night previous. He recognized his folly in not making sure of the large sum he had at one time won, and determined to act more wisely in future.

Presently, when he chanced to be unemployed, Smithson beckoned to him.

"Benton," he said, "you remember my speaking to you about missing money from the till?"

"Yes, sir; but I thought you decided that it was only a falling off in receipts."

"Yes, I said that; but it seems to me that the deficiency is too great to be accounted for in that way."

"You may be right, sir. You remember what I told you about the boy?"

"You think he took the money?"

"I feel about sure of it."

"And you think he gambles it away?"

"Such is my impression."

"How am I to find out the truth of the matter?"

"I would suggest that you have the boy searched. I feel sure that you will find that he has a considerable sum of money in his pocket."

"That may be, but he will say that he has saved it from his wages."

"Oh, yes; I have no doubt he will say so," said Benton, nodding his head significantly.

"And it may be true. He doesn't seem to spend much."

"He has bought some clothes."

"True; but he was quite able to do so out of what I pay him and have money left over."

"Well, I hope it is so. I don't want to harm the boy, but I thought it only due to you to tell you what I know."

"You don't appear to know much. You only suspect. However, I will call Grant and see what he has to say."

Grant, being summoned, came up to where they were standing.

"Do you want to speak to me, Mr. Smithson?" he asked.

"Yes, Grant; about an unpleasant matter."

"Have I done anything wrong? Are you dissatisfied with me?"

"I can't say. The fact is, for some time past I have been missing money from the drawer."

Grant's look of surprise was genuine.

"I am very sorry to hear it," he said.

"Of course the money could not have disappeared of itself. Some one must have taken it."

"I hope you don't suspect me," said Grant quickly.

"I have always regarded you as honest, but Benton here tells me that you have formed some bad habits."

"I should be glad to know what Mr. Benton has to say about me," said Grant, regarding his fellow waiter with indignation. Benton, in spite of his assurance, could not help looking confused and ill at ease.

"He tells me that you are in the habit of visiting gambling saloons."

"He has told you a falsehood," said Grant boldly.

"I told you he would deny it, Mr. Smithson," said Benton, determined to face it through.

"Has he seen me in a gambling house?" demanded Grant.

"I have seen you coming out of one."

"That's false. If he can find any one to confirm his false charge, I will not object to your believing it."

"I have no doubt a good many have seen you there."

"Is there any other charge he brings against me, Mr. Smithson?"

"He says he has seen you under the influence of liquor."

"That also is false. He has invited me go into a saloon and take a drink, but I always refused."

"Oh, you are an angel," sneered Benton.

"I don't pretend to be an angel, but I am honest and temperate, and I never drink."

"I think, Mr. Smithson, if you will search the boy you will find a good sum of money in his pocket."

"Is that true, Grant?" asked the restaurant keeper.

"Yes, sir. I have about a hundred dollars in my pocket."

"I told you so," said Benton triumphantly.

"I never knew there was anything wrong in saving money," retorted Grant. "I am anxious to get together money enough to warrant me in going to the mines."

"There is nothing wrong in that," said Smithson kindly. "And now, Grant, that we have had Benton's testimony against you, I want to ask you what you know against him."

"I would rather not tell," answered Grant.

*Begun in No. 430 of THE ARGOSY.

"That is very creditable to you; but you must remember that you have a duty to me, your employer. Have you seen him enter a gambling house?"

"Yes, sir," answered Grant reluctantly.

"I told you, sir, that I had looked in once or twice," said Benton, ill at ease.

"Only once or twice?"

"Well, I won't be precise as to the number of times."

"And if I did play, that doesn't convict me of having stolen money from your till."

"That is true."

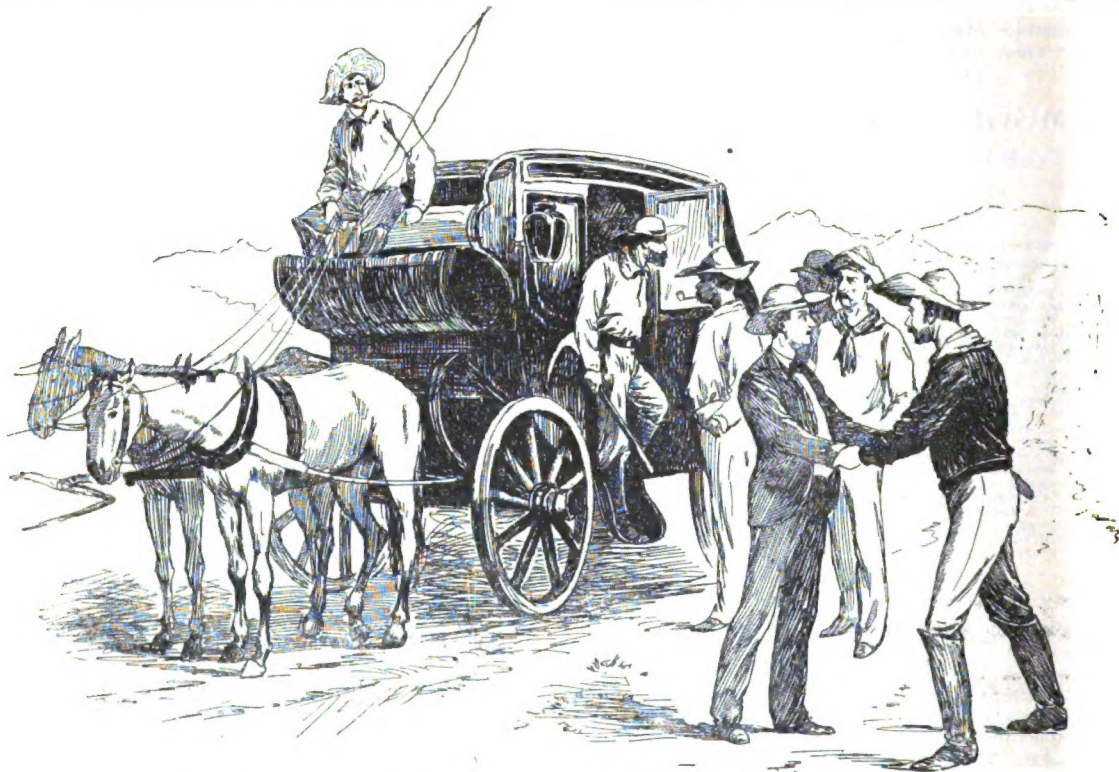
"I was foolish, I admit, and I mean to give up the practice."

"You said you didn't play."

"Because I thought it would make you think I was guilty of theft."

"On that point I have other evidence."

"What is it? If Grant says he saw me take anything he lies."



GRANT FOUND IT DIFFICULT TO RECOGNIZE IN THE ROUGHLY DRESSED MINER HIS FRIEND OF THE PLAINS—TOM COOPER.

"Were you in a gambling house last night?"

"Yes; I looked on."

"How long did you stay?"

"A few minutes."

"Did you play?"

"No," answered Benton hesitatingly.

"I wish I knew how much he knows," thought Benton. "Somebody must have been telling him about me."

"What, then, was your object in going in?"

"I was wakeful, and thought I would while away a few minutes there. When I felt sleepy, I withdrew."

Just then Vincent entered, as previously arranged between him and Smithson.

"Mr. Vincent," said the proprietor, "did you see either of my waiters in a gambling house last evening?"

"I saw him," pointing to Benton.

"He admits that he went in, but says he did not play."

"He seems to be forgetful," said Vincent coolly. "He played for a considerable time, and had a great run of luck."

Benton said nothing. He looked very much discomposed, but waited to see how much Vincent could tell.

"So he was a winner?"

"He won nearly five hundred dollars."

"That doesn't look as if he were the novice he claims to be."

"But he didn't keep his winnings. He kept on playing till he lost all he had won."

"You must remember, sir," interrupted Benton, "that a green hand is often luckier than a practiced gambler."

"So I have heard."

"I have not said it, Mr. Benton."

"Then I should like to know what evidence you can bring against me."

"Do you remember these two bills?" asked Vincent, taking out his wallet and producing two five dollar notes.

"Well, what about them?" asked Benton doggedly.

"I gave you two gold pieces for them last evening."

"Yes; I believe you did."

"You took them from the money drawer before you left the restaurant."

"That is false!"

"Do you see the cross in red ink on the reverse side of the bills?"

"Well, what of it?"

"I marked the bills in that way so as to be able to trace them."

"Well," said Benton faintly.

"They were put into the drawer at three o'clock yesterday afternoon. They must have been taken out some time between that hour and the time when you produced them in the gambling house."

"I am the victim of a conspiracy," said Benton, turning pale.

"If it is a conspiracy to put my friend here on your track," said Smithson, "then you have some color for your statement. Mr. Vincent is an old detective."

Albert Benton was silenced. Ingenious as he was, there was nothing for him left to say.

"Now, Benton," said Mr. Smithson, "how much have you taken from me during the time you have been in my employment?"

"Perhaps a hundred dollars," answered Benton sullenly.

"I am very much mistaken if the amount is not four or five times as great. Are you prepared to make restitution?"

"I have no money."

"Then I shall feel justified in ordering your arrest. Your guilt is aggravated by your seeking to throw the blame on Grant."

"I have a valuable diamond at home. I will turn that over to you," said Benton with a sudden thought.

"How much is it worth?"

"I paid three hundred dollars for it."

"You can go and get it."

Benton took off his apron, put on his hat, and left the restaurant.

Half an hour—an hour—passed, and he did not return.

"Mr. Smithson," said Vincent, "the fellow has given us the slip. He won't come back, nor will you ever see anything of his diamond. I don't believe, for my part, that he had any."

The detective was right. Benton managed to borrow fifteen dollars of a friend, and within an hour he had left Sacramento for good.

CHAPTER XXII.

PULLING UP STAKES.

MR. SMITHSON supplied the place vacated by Benton without delay. He engaged a man of middle age who had come back from the mines with a fair sum of money. Before the first week was up, he made his employer an offer for the restaurant, and after some negotiation the transfer was made.

"I should like to have you continue Grant Colburn in your employment," said Smithson, with a kindly consideration for his young waiter.

"I am sorry to say that I cannot do it," answered his successor. "I have a young townsman at the mines who has not been very successful. I have promised to send for him in case I went into business."

"It is of no consequence," said Grant. "I have always wanted to go to the mines, and now I have money enough to make the venture."

The same day, by a lucky coincidence, Grant received the following letter from Tom Cooper:

HOWE'S GULCH, Oct. 5.

DEAR GRANT: I have been meaning to write you for some time, but waited till I could tell whether I was likely to succeed or not. For the first month I was here I only got out enough gold dust to pay my expenses, and envied father and you, who have a sure thing. The fact is, nothing is more uncertain than mining. You may strike it rich, or may fail entirely. Till last week it looked as if it would be the last in my case. But all at once I struck a pocket, and have thus far got two hundred and seventy-five dollars out of it, with more in prospect. That will make up for lost time. I tell you, Grant, it is a very exciting life. You are likely any day to make a strike. Further down the creek there is a long, lank Vermonter who in a single week realized a thousand dollars from his claim. He took it pretty coolly, but was pleased all the same. "If this sort of thing continues a little longer," he told me, "I'll become a bloated bondholder, and go home and marry Sal Stebbins. She's waitin' for me, but the old man, her father, told her she'd have to wait till I could show him two thousand dollars, all my own. Well, I don't think I'll have to wait long before that time comes," and I guess he's right.

But I haven't said what I set out to say. That is, I wish you would pull up stakes and come out here. I feel awful lonely, and would like your company. There's a claim about a hundred feet from mine that I have bought for twenty-five dollars, and I will give it to you. The man that's been workin' it is a lazy, shiftless creeter, and although he's got discouraged, I think it's his fault that it hasn't paid better. Half the time he's been sittin' down by his claim readin' a dime novel. If a man wants to succeed here, he's got to have a good share of "get there" about him. I think you'll fill the bill. Now, just pack up your things, and come right out. Go and see father and mother, but don't show 'em this letter. I don't want them to know how I am getting along. I mean some day to surprise 'em. Just tell them that I'm gettin' fair pay, and hope to do better.

There's a stage that leaves Sacramento Hotel for "these diggin's." You won't have any trouble in findin' it. Hopin' soon to see you, I am

Your friend, TOM COOPER.

This letter quite cheered up Grant. He was anxious to find out how it seemed to be digging for gold. He counted over his savings and found he had a little over a hundred dollars. But lack of money need not have interfered with his plans. On the same day he received a letter from Giles Crosmont, from which we extract a paragraph:

Remember, Grant, that when you get ready to go to the mines, you can draw upon me for any sum of money you want. Or, should you lose your place, or get short of money, let me know, and I will see that you are not inconvenienced for lack of funds. I am thinking of making a little investment in your name, which I think will be of advantage to you.

"That's a friend worth having," said Grant to himself. "If I had a father, I should like to have him like Mr. Crosmont. He certainly could not be any kinder."

He wrote back that he was intending to start on the following day for Howe's Gulch, and would write again from there. He concluded thus: "I thank you very much for your kind offer of a loan, but I have enough to start me at the mines, and will wait till I stand in need. When I do need money, I won't hesitate to call upon you, for I know that you are a true friend."

He went round to see the blacksmith the next forenoon.

"How do you happen to be off work at this hour?" asked Mr. Cooper.

"I'm a gentleman of leisure, Mr. Cooper."

"How is that, Grant? You haven't been discharged, have you?"

"Well, I've lost my place. Mr. Smithson has sold out his restaurant, and the new man has a friend of his whom he is going to put in my place."

"I'm sorry, Grant," said the blacksmith in a tone of concern. "It doesn't seem hardly fair."

"Oh, it's all right, Mr. Cooper. I am going out to the mines, as I always intended to do. I shall start tomorrow morning."

"I wish you luck. I don't know how Tom is getting along."

"Then I can tell you, for I've had a letter from him. He writes that he is doing fairly well."

Jerry Cooper shook his head.

"I guess he ain't doing as well as he did on the old farm at home," he said.

"He writes very cheerfully and wants me to come out."

"He's too proud to own up that he's disappointed. Just tell him that if he wants to come back to Sacramento and help me in the shop, I can give him two dollars a day and his living."

"I'll tell him, sir. I hope you are doing well."

"I never did so well in my life," answered the blacksmith complacently. "Why, Grant, I've averaged ten dollars a day over and above all expenses ever since I took the shop. How is that for high?"

"Why, father, I never knew you to use slang before," said Mrs. Cooper reprovingly.

"Can't help it, old lady. It's my good luck that makes me a bit frisky. If we were only to home, I'd give you money to buy a new bonnet and a silk dress."

"Thank you, father, but they wouldn't do me any good here. Just fancy me walking through the town dressed up in that style. How folks would stare! When I get home I won't mind accepting your offer."

"Well, folks don't dress much here, that's a fact. Why, they don't dress as much as they did in Crestville. I never looked so shabby then, but nobody takes any notice of it. There's one comfort, if I don't wear fine clothes it isn't because I can't afford it."

"If you're going away tomorrow, Grant," said Mrs. Cooper hospitably, "you must come and take supper with us tonight. I don't know as I can give you any brown bread, but I'll give you some baked beans, in Eastern style."

"I shall be glad to get them, Mrs. Cooper. I haven't tasted any since I left home."

"I wish I could send some to Tom," said his mother. "Poor fellow, I don't suppose he gets many of the comforts of home where he is."

"I am afraid I couldn't carry the beans very conveniently," said Grant with a laugh.

On his way back to the restaurant to make some preparations for his coming departure, he was accosted by a tall, thin man, who looked like a lay preacher.

"My young friend," he said, with an apologetic cough, "excuse me for addressing you, but I am in great need of assistance. I—Why, it's Grant!" he exclaimed in amazement.

"Mr. Silverthorn!"

"Yes, my young friend, it is your old friend Silverthorn, who counts himself fortunate in meeting you once more," and he grasped Grant's reluctant hand and shook it vigorously.

"You may be my old friend, Mr. Silverthorn," returned Grant, "but it strikes me you didn't treat me as such when you took the money from my pocket."

"I acknowledge it, Grant, I acknowledge it," said Silverthorn, as he took the same old red silk handkerchief from his pocket and wiped his eyes, "but I was driven to it by want and dire necessity."

"Well, let it pass! When did you reach Sacramento?"

"Only yesterday. Ah, Grant, I have had sad vicissitudes! I wandered in the wilderness, nearly starving, till I came across a party of Pennsylvania Quakers, who aided me and brought me with them to this place."

"I hope you did not repay their hospitality as you did ours."

"No, no. I obeyed the promptings of my better nature. And now, how have you prospered? Have you been to the mines?"

"No, I have been employed in a restaurant."

"In a restaurant! Oh, how the world moves me! Ah, Grant, I have not tasted food for twenty four hours."

"Come with me, then, and I will see that you have a dinner."

He took Silverthorn to the restaurant and authorized him to order what he liked. Mr. Silverthorn was by no means backward in accepting the invitation, and Grant had a dollar to pay.

"I feel better!" sighed Silverthorn. "Do you think I could get employment here?"

"No; my place is taken."

"And how are my old friends, the Coopers?"

"Mr. Cooper is running a blacksmith shop, and Tom is at Howe's Gulch, where I am going."

"Could you—you are so kind—pay my expenses to the mines? I should so like to see my friend Tom."

"No, I couldn't," answered Tom bluntly.

"I thought I would ask," said Silverthorn, by no means abashed.

"Tell Mr. Cooper that I will soon call at his shop."

"I don't think he will care to see you," thought Grant.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE FIRST DAY AT THE MINES.

ABOUT three o'clock in the afternoon the stage from Sacramento arrived at Howe's Gulch.

Among the other passengers Grant descended, his limbs sore from rattling over the roughest kind of roads, and, stretching himself, he looked around him.

The stage had drawn up in front of the hotel, but it was not such a hotel as the reader is accustomed to see. It was a long, low frame building, with what might be called an attic overhead, which was used as a general dormitory, with loose beds of straw spread over the floor. Here twenty five persons slept in a single room. Down below, rude meals were supplied for those who could afford to pay the price.

But Grant felt little interest in the hotel. He expected to meet Tom Cooper, and looked out for him.

He had not long to wait.

"How are you, Grant? Delighted to see you. How's the folks?"

Grant turned, and in the bearded, roughly dressed miner found it difficult to recognize his friend of the plains—Tom Cooper.

His face lighted up as he grasped Tom's hand cordially.

"Your father and mother are well," he said, "and so is Mr. Silverthorn."

"What! have you seen that scoundrel?"

"I left him at Sacramento. He wanted me to pay his fare out here."

"You declined?"

"Yes; I thought he would be company for your father. He may adopt Silverthorn in your place."

"He's welcome to it if he likes. It's good for sore eyes to see you, Grant. How do you feel?"

"Sore enough. I thought I should be shaken to pieces over the rough road."

"You are hungry, I reckon. Come into the hotel, and we'll have dinner."

Nothing loath, Grant followed Tom into the dining room, where dinner was laid in readiness for the stage passengers. It was not such a meal as an epicure would enjoy, but Grant ate with great relish.

"So you have been doing well, Tom?" said Grant between two mouthfuls.

"Yes; you didn't tell father what I wrote you?"

"No; you told me not to."

"What did he say about me?"

"He said he didn't believe you were doing much; that he thought you had better come back to Sacramento and help him in the shop."

Tom laughed.

"I think I'll stay here a little longer," he replied. "How is dad doing?"

"Finely. He is making ten dollars a day."

"Good for him! He wouldn't do for mining. Besides, there's mother. He's better off where he is."

"Where do you sleep, Tom?"

"Up stairs. I have a pair of blankets up there, and a pillow, and I don't need anybody to make my bed."

"I suppose I ought to have a pair of blankets."

"I'll buy you a pair. There's a chap going to leave today, and we can buy his. Now come out and see the mines."

Leaving the hotel, Tom led the way to the mining claims. There was a deep gulch half a mile distant, at the base of which ran a creek, and it was along this that the claims were staked out. They were about twenty feet wide, in some cases more. Tom led the way to his, and showed Grant the way he worked. He used a rocker, or cradle. A sieve was fitted in at the top, and into this the miner shoveled the dirt. Tom rocked the cradle with one hand, after it was filled, and poured water on the dirt from a dipper. Gradually the dirt was washed out, and if there was any gold it would remain in small gleaming particles mixed with black sand.

"Isn't that rather a rough way of working, Tom?" asked Grant, after his tour of inspection.

"Yes; I have been thinking of getting what they call a 'long tom' (no pun intended)."

"What is that?"

I won't give Tom's answer, but quote a more accurate description from an English book published in 1857: "A 'long tom' is nothing more than a wooden trough from twelve to twenty five feet long, and about a foot wide. At the lower end it widens considerably, and the floor of it is a sheet of iron, pierced with holes half an inch in diameter, under which is placed a flat box a couple of inches deep. The long tom is set at a slight inclination over the place which is to be worked, and a stream of water is kept running through it by means of a hose. While some of the party shovel the dirt into the tom as fast as they can dig it up, one man stands at the lower end, stirring up the dirt as it is washed down, separating the stones and throwing them out, while the earth and small gravel fall with the water through the sieve into the ripple box. This box is about five feet long, and is crossed by two partitions. It is also placed at an inclination, so that the water falling into it keeps the dirt loose, allowing the gold and heavy particles to settle to the bottom, while all the lighter stuff washes over the end of the box along with the water."

The dirt taken out of the ripple box has to be washed out afterward, so as to leave the gold particles.

"Where is the claim you have bought for me, Tom?" asked Grant.

"A little further down the creek. I will show you."

"Lend me your cradle, and see if I can work it."

Grant took the cradle, and, under Tom's direction, shoveled in some dirt, and proceeded to rock it. He was quite delighted when, as the result of his labors, a few specks of gold appeared at the bottom.

"How much does it amount to, Tom?" he asked, gathering it into his hand.

"Perhaps a dime."

Grant looked rather disappointed.

"It would take some time to get rich at that rate," he said, rather ruefully.

"Yes; but there is always a chance of 'striking it rich.' That is what keeps our spirits up. By the way, Grant, I have a proposal to make to you."

"What is it, Tom?"

"Suppose we work together. We can take turns in digging, shoveling in the dirt, and rocking the cradle. That will be more sociable, and we can divide equally whatever gold we obtain."

"That will suit me exactly, Tom; but, as you are more experienced than I, you ought to have more than half."

"No, Grant. It shall be share and share alike. There is another advantage. It will save getting an extra rocker."

"I am ready to begin at once."

"Are you not too tired?"

"No, Tom. I want to feel that I have begun to work. If I get tired I can sleep better tonight."

They worked for two hours, when they knocked off for the day. The work was done on Grant's claim. Tom estimated the result at a dollar.

"That is fifty cents apiece," he said. "Tomorrow we'll do better."

"I don't mind, Tom. I have made a beginning. Now I feel that I am a miner."

At six o'clock they went to the hotel, which was a general lounging place for the miners.

(To be continued.)